

ORIGINAL



EX PARTE OR LATE FIL

Nov. 2, 2002

Office of the Secretary of the FCC  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Subject: "EX PARTE COMMENT FOR DOCKET NUMBER 90-571 on NECA FUNDS and "EX PARTE COMMENT TO DOCKET NUMBER 98-67 ON TRS/STS OUTREACH"

Dear Secretary:

### PROVIDING SPEECH TO SPEECH

I live in Oregon and I urge the Oregon Public Utility Commission to make telephones accessible to more people with speech disabilities by increasing its Speech to Speech outreach effort. Ms Damara Paris, who oversees the service; has made a great effort to work with the limited resources; the PUC needs to increase those resources substantially.

### SUCCESS

In California, people with speech disabilities have dramatically improved their lives because of STS. One example is Dr. Robert Aber who experienced great growth in his psychology practice once he was able to communicate with clients over STS. Writer Pam Hoye advanced her writing career substantially using STS to gather facts for articles. Dr Bob Segalman became successful as a social activist helping people with speech disabilities once he began using STS. STS potentially answers the telecommunications needs of thousands of people.

### PROVIDING STS OUTREACH

In addition to providing STS itself, providing outreach appropriate to people with speech disabilities is an essential part of access. When people with speech disabilities have appropriate training to use STS, they become more independent, participate more in the community, get jobs etc. The new relay regulations require states and relay providers to contract such that relay is accessible to users with speech disabilities.

If Oregon provides STS without appropriate outreach, call volumes will be extremely low. Call volumes could rise substantially with an extensive STS outreach service tailored to people with speech disabilities. Providing appropriate outreach for STS will help Oregon residents with speech disabilities enter the mainstream of life. Outreach can be done using a variety of media,

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including local public service ads on television, radio and newspapers, and use of the Internet.

Having worked as a vocational rehabilitation counselor for the state agency in Arizona and California, I found that the inability to use the telephone provides a substantial employment barrier for persons with speech disabilities. This service would help many people to use the phone, who are otherwise unable to do so.

Because I want this independence for people with speech disabilities in Oregon, I strongly urge Oregon Public Utility Commission to provide an STS outreach service similar to the very successful **STS** intensive outreach services in California, Minnesota and Maryland.

### FUNDING STS OUTREACH

Based on Minnesota's budgetary experience, such a service may cost \$83,000 annually based on Oregon's population.. Many states have sufficient surcharge money to fund a STS outreach service without difficulty. Vocational rehabilitation client services money may be available to teach people to use STS as it fosters independence and makes people job ready.

### CONCLUSION

A large proportion of people with speech disabilities have other disabilities as well; this makes it very difficult for them to advocate for themselves. Therefore, it is necessary for the rest of us to insure that services like STS outreach are adequately provided for.

Again, I strongly urge the Oregon Public Utility Commission to budget for an effective STS outreach service with an annual budget of about \$83,000.

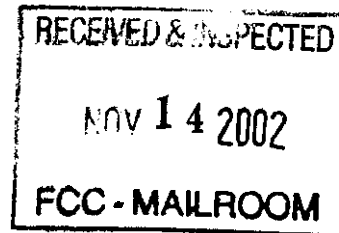
Sincerely,

Roxie Choroser

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